

SIX PĀLI ETYMOLOGIES

Here is another random collection of words which are either omitted from PED,² or given an incorrect meaning or etymology there.

1. *āsitta* "cursed"
2. *ghaccā* "killing"
3. *ghañña* "killing"
4. *niruttipatha* "(having) a way of speaking"
5. *matigha* "mother-killer, matricide"
6. *gedha/rodha* "thicket"

1. *āsitta* "cursed"

We find at Ja V 87,23* the compound *āsitta-satto*. The cty explains this as *āsitta-visena satto* (V 87,26'), where *satto* is presumably to be derived from Skt *śapta* "cursed". CPD takes the compound *āsitta-visa* as a noun, and we should therefore translate "cursed by the poison (which has been) dripped", although I see no reason for rejecting the view that it is a *bahuvrīhi* adjective, in which case we could translate "cursed by the one who is dripping poison". CPD quotes Ja-gp 398,31 foll., which reads *āsitta-sapatto*, and explains *sapatto* as *sapatha*, i.e. Skt

¹ See K.R. Norman, "Pāli Lexicographical Studies V", in *JPTS*, XII, pp. 49-63.

² Abbreviations of the titles of Pāli texts are as in the Epilegomena to V. Trenckner: *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, Vol. I, Copenhagen 1924-48 (= CPD). In addition: BHS = Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit; PTS = Pali Text Society; PED = PTS's *Pali-English Dictionary*; PTC = *Pāli Tipiṭakam Concordance*; MIA = Middle Indo-Aryan; AMg = *Ardha-Māgadhī*; Pkt = Prakrit; Skt = Sanskrit; GDhp = *Gāndhārī Dharmapada*; Utt = *Uttarajjhayaṇa-sutta*; Ss = *Sattasaī*; BD = *Book of the Discipline*; KS = *Kindred Sayings*; D of B = *Dialogues of the Buddha*; EV = *Elders' Verses*; cty = commentary.

śapatha “curse”. I think that the cty is correct in seeing the need for a word meaning “cursed” here, but I think the wrong word has been chosen to bear this meaning. I believe that *āsitta* is to be derived < *āsatta* < **āśapta*. This compound of the root *śap-* seems not to occur in Skt, but there seems to be no reason why it should not have existed. This, then, would be another example of palatalisation of -a- after ś.³ If we retain the reading *āsitta-satto* it would mean “the cursed person”, but CPD prefers the reading *āsittamatto*, showing the m/s alternation,⁴ which would then mean “as soon as cursed”.

2. *ghaccā* “killing”

This word occurs in the compounds *mūla-ghaccā* (D III 67,12 foll.); *sabbasunakhaghaccā* (Ja I 176,27); and *saghaccā* (Ja I 177,4*). There is no doubt about its meaning “killing”, nor about its connection with the root *han-* “to strike”, but PED does not explain its precise form. It is to be derived from *ghātya*, the future passive participle of the root *han-*, meaning “to be killed”, and is an example of the future passive participle being used as an action noun. This usage has been noticed for Skt by Renou: “Les *kr̥tya* fournissent assez librement des abstraits neutres”.⁵ He quotes *rakṣitavya*, *kārya*, *rantavya*, *patitavya*, *geya*, *śayanīya*, *tāpya*, *steya*. He also quotes the feminine *kr̥tyā* “action, act, deed”.

Although the use of the past participle as an action noun in MIA is well-known,⁶ the use of the future passive participle in this way

³ See K.R. Norman, “The palatalisation of vowels in Middle Indo-Aryan”, *Journal of the Oriental Institute (Baroda)*, XXV, pp. 328-42 (§ 2.9)

⁴ See EV II, p. 116 (ad Thī 262).

⁵ *Grammaire sanscrite*, § 161 (p. 206).

⁶ See EV I 129 (ad Th 36) and EV II 115 (ad Thī 261).

is less common. We can, however, quote other examples from Pāli and Pkt:

- (a) in Pāli: *chejja* “cutting”; *mūla-chejja* Sp 213,22 (cf. Skt *chedya*)
bhejja “breaking, splitting” Vin III 47,2
khamanīya “healing, getting better” D II 99,22
anumodanīya “thanks, expression of gratitude” (= *anumodana*) A III 50,16; Ap 394,18
theyya “stealing” (cf. Skt *steya*)
palobhiya “seduction”; *isi-palobhiya* Ja V 161,13*
- (b) in Pkt: *jujjha* “fighting” Utt 9.35 (< *yudhya*)
pujja “honouring” Utt 11 [title] (< *pūjya*)
hassa “laughing” (in *a-hass-ira*) Utt 11.4 (cf. Skt *hāsyā*)
mohanijja “deluding, delusion” Utt 9.1 (= *mohana*)
āvaranijja “obstructing, obstruction” Utt 33.2 (= *āvaraṇa*)
sim̐jiavva Ss 392 “jingling” (**siñjitavya*)
paampiavva Ss 450 “chattering” (**prajalpitavya*)
ramiavva Ss 461 “pleasure, enjoyment, play” (**ram-itavya*; cf. Skt *rantavya*)
cum̐viavva Ss 465 “kissing” (**cumbitavya*)
rūsiavva Ss 466 “being angry” (**rūṣitavya*)
rujja Ss 843 “wailing” (**rodya* = *rodanīya*)

3. *ghañña* “killing”

PED gives the correct etymology for this word, but is hesitant about it, and undecided whether it is a noun or an adjective. It is to be derived from the *vr̥ddhi* formation noun *ghānya* from *ghana* in its early

sense of “striker, killer, destroyer”. The word exists in Skt, but is used only in the later sense of *ghana* “thick”, and is found in the Skt Dhātupāṭha in the sense of “compactness”. It is therefore a noun, and the *tatpuruṣa* compound with *atta* found at Dh 164 (*attaḥaṇṇāya phallati*) is also a noun.

4. *niruttipatha* “(having) a way of speaking”

The compound *niruttipatha* occurs in the Pāli Canon at Vin III 57,22-23; D II 63,29 (Sv 503,34 foll.: *niruttipatho ti saraṭi ti sato, sampajānāti ti sampajāno ti, ādikassa kāraṇāpadesavasena pavattassa vohārassa patho*); 68,19; S III 71-73 (Spk II 279,5: *niruttiyo va nirutti-pathā; atha vā niruttiyo ca tā niruttivasena viññātabbānam atthānam pathattā pathā cā ti nirutti-pathā*) quoted at Kv 140-41; Nidd II 243,26 (§ 563); Dhs 7,12. The PTC translates it as “path, process of language”; BD translates as “way of speaking”; D of B as “process of explanation”; KS as “mode of reckoning”; Points of Controversy as “mode in word”; Dhs-Trsl “processes of explanation”. Professor N.A. Jayawickrama (in a private note which he made in my copy of PED) suggests “linguistic convention”.

In the Vinaya the compound occurs in a set of five stories which are told in the section on *pārājika*,⁷ illustrating the fact that an offence is committed only if there is the intention to do wrong. The first story concerns a monk who spread out his robe in the open air: *tena kho pana samayena aññataro bhikkhu ajjhokāse cīvaraṃ pattharivā vihāraṃ pāvisi. aññataro bhikkhu mā-y-idaṃ cīvaraṃ nassī ti paṭisāmesi. so nikkhamitvā bhikkhū pucchi: āvuso mayhaṃ cīvaraṃ kena avahaṭan ti. so evaṃ āha: mayā avahaṭan ti. so taṃ ādiyi asamaṇo si tvaṃ ti. tassa kukkuccaṃ*

⁷ The *uddāna* states: *niruttiyā paṭṭa akkhātā*, Vin III 55,27.

*ahosi. bhagavato etam atthaṃ ārocesi. kiṃcitto tvaṃ bhikkhū ti. niruttipatho ahaṃ bhagavā ti. anāpatti bhikkhu niruttipathe ti.*⁸

Miss Horner translates this story⁹: “At one time a certain monk having spread out his robe in the open air, entered the vihāra. A certain monk, saying: “Do not let this robe be lost,” put it aside. Having come out (of the vihāra), he asked the monks: “Your reverences, who has stolen my robe ?” He said: “I have stolen it.” He seized him and said: “You are not a true recluse.” Thereupon he was remorseful. He told this matter to the lord. He said: “Of what were you thinking, monk ?” “I, lord ? It was a way of speaking,” he said. (The lord) said: “There is no offence, monk, in the way of speaking.”

Comparable stories are told (in an abbreviated way, in some cases) about a monk who deposits his robe on a chair, his mat on a chair, his bowl under a chair, and also about a nun who deposits her robe on a fence. In each case the monk who had intended to do a service to the other monk stated that he had stolen the object, but the Buddha announced that there was no offence *niruttipathe*. Although there is some possibility of ambiguity as regards the speaker on each occasion, so that it is not entirely clear who feels remorse, Miss Horner solves the problem by a set of footnotes identifying the speaker on each occasion. She does not explain why the second monk says he has stolen the robe, or what “the way of speaking” means.

In his commentary Buddhaghosa explains: *niruttipatha-vatthusmiṃ ādiyī ti gaṇhi, coro si tvaṃ ti parāmasi, itaro pana kena avahaṭan ti vutte mayā avahaṭan ti pucchāsabhāgena paṭiññam adāsi. yadi hi itarena kena gahitaṃ kena apanitaṃ kena ṭhapitan ti vuttaṃ abhaviṣsa, addhā ayam pi mayā gahitaṃ apanitaṃ ṭhapitan ti vā vadeyya. mukhaṃ*

⁸ Vin III 57,16-23.

⁹ BD, Vol. I, pp. 95-96.

*nāma bhuñjanatthāya ca kathanatthāya ca kataṃ, theyyacittam pana vinā avahāro n' atthi. tena bhagavā anāpatti bhikkhu niruttipathe ti. vohāravacanamatte anāpatti ti attho.*¹⁰ “Without the intention to steal there is no theft. For this reason the Bhagavat said: ‘There is no offence, bhikkhu, in the way of speaking’. This means that there is no offence in the mere conventional use of language”.

From the story in the following section, where there is an intention to steal, and therefore there is an offence,¹¹ it is clear that it was the bhikkhu who was called *asamaṇa* who felt remorse. He felt remorse at being called *asamaṇa* because he was only trying to be helpful, and had not actually taken the robe, in the sense of having stolen it, despite the answer which he had given to the questioner. The word *niruttipatha* is used with reference to the answer he gave. The robe-owner said, “Who has taken, i.e. stolen, my robe?”. The other replied, “I have taken [but not stolen] it.” Since by his words he had, in the robe-owner’s view, confessed his guilt, he called him *asamaṇa*, which caused the would-be do-gooder to feel remorse. When questioned by the Buddha, the robe-remover in effect said, “It was just my way of speaking. He asked who had taken it, and I said I had. He was using the word *avahaṭa* in the sense of ‘stolen’, whereas I was using it in the sense of ‘taken away (for safe keeping)’.”

As Buddhaghosa explains, the second monk was merely repeating the form of words used by the first monk. The latter had said *avahaṭam*, and the second monk had repeated his word. If the questioner had said *gahitaṃ* “seized”, *apanitaṃ* “removed” or *thapitaṃ* “placed”, the second monk would have used the same word in his reply. The point of the story is that *avahaṭa* (and the verb *avaharati* from which it is derived)

has two meanings: (1) to take away; (2) to take away with the intention of not returning, i.e. to steal. The first monk was using the word in the second sense “who has stolen my robe?”. The second monk, understanding the questioner to have used it in the first sense and to have said “who has taken my robe away?”, correctly answered “I have taken it away”, but his answer was understood to mean “I have stolen it”. When questioned by the Buddha as to his intention (“*kiṃcitto*?”), the second monk explained that he had used the word in a conventional way of speaking. The Buddha ruled that, even if someone seemed to confess to stealing, offence only arose if there was intention (to steal). There was no offence in the use of the conventional way of speaking, whereby the person who was questioned repeated the form of the words employed by his questioner. If a person, making use of a conventional way of speaking, i.e. repeating the word used by a questioner in conversation, seems to say that he has stolen something, but has not in fact stolen it, then there is no offence.

Miss Horner was clearly uncertain about the way in which to analyse the form of the compound. She took it as a *tatpuruṣa* compound on both occasions, but to do this she has to take *ahaṃ* as a monosyllabic sentence “I?”. Although this is not impossible in itself, it seems very unlikely that it could be possible in this context where it appears as the second word. She puts it as first word in her translation. Unless we are to see *ahaṃ* as an early replacement for *ayaṃ*, it would seem to be essential to take the compound in two different ways. First as a *bahuvrīhi* adjective, in agreement with *ahaṃ*: “I have a way of speaking”, i.e. “I was (merely) using words”, and then as a *tatpuruṣa* compound: “[There is no fault] in a way of speaking, i.e. in the mere use of words”.

¹⁰ Sp 374,10-19. The PTS edition reads *nirutti patheti*, breaking up the compound incorrectly.

¹¹ Vin III 58,5-10.

5. *mattigha* “mother-killer, matricide”

PED does not list this word, which occurs at Ja V 269,2*. It is glossed at 274,16' as *mātughātika*, and we may compare Skt *mātr-ghātaka* and *mātr-ghna* “a matricide”. The word is of interest because, if we follow the obvious division and take it to be *matti* + *gha* (< Skt *gha*), this is another example of *mātr* becoming *matti*- in compounds, and we can compare it with *matti-sambhava* (Sn 620 = Dh 396). The easiest way to explain *matti-sambhava*, however, is to assume that *matti* is a locative in a *tatpuruṣa* compound, i.e. **mātri* = *mātari*, by analogy with *mātrā* and *mātre*, cf. Skt *mātari-bhvarī*. It does not, however, seem possible to take *matti* as a locative in *mattigha*, and here we should have to assume that *mātr* > **māti* > *matti*-. The compound occurs at GDhp 17 in the form *yoneka-matra-sabhamu*, although it is not clear whether *yoneka* should be included in the compound. Brough¹² stated that the interpretation of *matti*- as *mātr*- was difficult and thought that the expression *mātr-sambhava* seemed forced. The GDhp form led him to suggest that *mātra*- is the original sense, although on the basis of the Tibetan version of the Udānavarga (the Skt version was not available to him) he conjectured that the Skr version had *mātr*. Now that Bernhard's edition is available we can see that Udānavarga 33.15 does, in fact, read *mātr-sambhavaṃ*. The existence of Pāli *matti-gha* suggests that the problem of *matti-sambhava* needs to be reconsidered.

6. *gedha/rodha* “thicket”

The word *gedha* occurs in a passage which occurs twice in the Pāli canon: *kathaṃ ca bhikkhave mahācoro gahananissito hoti ? idha bhikkhave mahācoro tiṇagahanam vā nissito hoti rukkhagahanam vā gedham vā mahāvanasaṇḍam vā* (A I 154,1 = III 128,23 [although the

PTS edition reads *rodham* in the latter reference]). Since the reference is to *gahana*-, one would expect some sort of vegetation to be involved, and in the absence of any other indication, I should prefer the translation “thicket”, which is given in PTC, rather than “cave” which is given in PED.

The cty explains: *gedhan ti ghanam araṇṇam* (v.l. *aṇṇamaṇṇam*) *saṃsattasākhāṃ ekābaddham mahāvanasaṇḍam* (Mp II 254,6). This too is interpreting the passage as referring to vegetation, rather than a cave. PTC quotes only the word *ghanam* from Mp, which implies that the editor of PTC assumed that *ghanam* was the gloss upon *gedham*. It would look as though *gedham* is being taken as an adjective in PTC, with *mahāvanasaṇḍam*, although the translation “thicket” which is given contradicts this. Taking it as an adjective does pose the question of why there should be the word *vā* following it, unless we are to understand *gedham* as standing for *gedha-gahanam*.

Clearly the tradition found difficulties with the word because, as noted above, we find *rodham* as a reading or as a v.l. in some editions, and the Burmese Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana edition actually reads *rodham* in both the canonical passages and the *aṭṭhakathā*. Although PED translates *rodha*- as “bank, dam”, taking it from 2√*rudh*-, I assume that it is actually from 1√*rudh*-, and means “the growing thing”.

There would then seem to be great doubt as to whether *gedha* actually exists but, if it does, then I suggest that it does not mean “cave”.

¹² GDhp, p. 183.